



State of Arizona

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Governor Jan Brewer Calls Special Session to Extend Federal Aid to Jobless Arizonans

PHOENIX – Governor Jan Brewer today issued a call to legislators for a Special Session on Friday, June 10, so that members may consider a minor change in state law to extend federal unemployment assistance to tens of thousands of Arizona families in need.

“Extending benefits for the unemployed is the right thing to do both for our local economy and for Arizona families,” said Governor Brewer. “For our economy, these federal dollars represent an immediate cash infusion of nearly \$3.5 million a week as recipients spend on necessities like food, rent and clothing. For as many as 45,000 Arizonans in need, these federal dollars may mean the difference between making the rent and living on the streets.”

The statutory change is needed to take advantage of a federal decision that makes available an extra 20 weeks of unemployment aid for states like Arizona with a persistently-high jobless rate. With a simple change in state law – allowing the state to measure its jobless rate over three years rather than just two – state officials can ensure that the 100 percent federally-funded aid flows to Arizonans in need. The program extension comes at no state cost.

The Governor has insisted upon accountability safeguards to prevent program abuse. The safeguards would require that recipients of unemployment aid: 1) search for job prospects at least four days a week and document their efforts; and 2) certify weekly that they are aware they must accept any job offer that pays at least minimum wage.

“The Legislature and I have taken concrete steps in recent months to turn Arizona’s economy around, and we’ve begun to see a lot of positive indicators,” said Governor Brewer. “But with the state unemployment rate still at 9.3 percent – and even higher in many rural areas – we can’t pretend there aren’t thousands of our fellow citizens who remain jobless and in need of assistance. Our window of opportunity to make this needed statutory change is now. I am optimistic the Legislature will join me in this effort.”

The unemployment aid is worth a little more \$200 a week, and recipients must demonstrate and document their efforts to find work. More than two-dozen states that previously faced the elimination of their federal unemployment aid have already made the statutory change advocated by Governor Brewer. These states include conservative strongholds like Texas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, Idaho and South Carolina.

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